



COUNTRY LEGENDS

C H E T A T K I N S





COUNTRY LEGENDS

Buddha Records proudly presents *RCA Country Legends*, a new series featuring classic recordings from some of the biggest stars of country music. Each *RCA Country Legends* release includes the artist's most popular songs as well as a few surprises, along with detailed liner notes and rare photos. A history lesson in country music through some of the most popular songs ever created by a uniquely talented group of artists firmly established as *RCA Country Legends*.

On June 30, 2001 the music world lost one of its greatest legends and friends. Chet Atkins, performer, producer, and architect of the Nashville sound, singlehandedly put country guitar on the map, his records inspiring guitarists in all fields. Atkins spent 35 years with RCA, including service as the vice-president of the country division. *RCA Country Legends* features 16 of his greatest recordings for the label, including rare cuts never previously released in the U.S.



1. YES MA'AM
2. PETITE WALTZ
3. ONE MAN BOOGIE
(PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED IN U.S.)
4. PRISSY
5. BARBER SHOP RAG
6. CARNAVALITO
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(PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED IN U.S.)
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GALLERY





On June 30, 2001, Chet Atkins died at age 77 after an extended bout with cancer. In a career that lasted nearly 60 years, his legacy is staggering.

He influenced a half-century of guitar music and technology in ways both obvious and subtle. As an RCA producer, he played a pivotal role in creating the “Nashville Sound” production style that broadened country’s popularity for all time.

Defining him by his own hits is pointless. In his entire career, just nine Chet Atkins solo singles made the *Billboard* country charts. Only one, 1965’s “Yakety Axe,” made the Top Ten. While he continued releasing singles, LPs became his principal platform in the mid-50s, the extended format allowing him to explore various styles and moods. He developed a following of fans who enjoyed his albums, as well as countless country and rock guitarists (some later famous themselves) who absorbed Atkins albums as virtual tutorials. In the end, his masterpieces are spread across albums, singles and even material unreleased for decades. This *Country Legends* collection, a follow-up to *Guitar Legend: The RCA Years*, showcases 16 such tunes.

Some of Chet’s finest instrumentals were penned by his friend, singer-guitarist Jerry Reed. As Merle Travis was Chet’s early inspiration, the music of both inspired Reed to create his own complex picking style. Jaunty, harmonically rich and brimming with sly wit, Reed instrumentals fit Chet hand-in-glove. The minor-key, syncopated “Yes Ma’am,” first heard on the 1964 *Guitar Country* album, the only Chet Atkins LP to top *Billboard*’s Hot Country Albums chart (six weeks), is a microcosm of Reed’s compositional skills.

In just one October day, Chet recorded his classic 1956 *Finger-Style Guitar* LP, one of the first to become a best-seller. Playing amplified and unaccompanied, he gave the Belgian pop instrumental “Petite Waltz” an understated, delicate treatment that reflected his perfectionism and polish. That aside, he could be awesome playing strictly from the gut. He did precisely that on the roaring, aggressive 1951 “One Man Boogie,” inspired by bandleader Tommy Dorsey’s 1938 hit recording “Boogie Woogie.” On it, Chet overdubbed raw, bluesy electric guitar parts atop acoustic rhythm guitar.

“Prissy,” a Reed composition named for (and credited to) his wife, singer Priscilla Mitchell, is the only Atkins chart single on this collection, having made the Top 30 in 1966, with Reed as part of the band. All Chet’s records featured topflight players, but the ones backed by fellow RCA artists Homer and Jethro had a particular magic. He’d first met guitarist Homer Haynes and mandolinist Jethro Burns in 1945, when they all worked at Cincinnati’s WLW radio. The trio idolized Belgian jazz guitar wizard Django

Reinhardt, whose fervent spirit permeated anything the three recorded together, be it Chet backing the pair's witty song parodies or their unrelenting swing behind his breezy 1949 "Barber Shop Rag."

In the 1950s, Chet began experimenting with nylon-string acoustic guitar; began using it on records around 1960; and gradually used it as much as he used his electric guitars. It's obviously appropriate on the pulsing "Carnivalito," recorded as a duet with Nashville studio violinist Lisa Silver on the 1975 album *The Night Atlanta Burned*, a collection issued under the name The Atkins String Company.

The unorthodox "Boo Boo Stick Beat," penned in 1959 by legendary Nashville session drummer Buddy Harman and songwriter John D. Loudermilk, was a landmark recording for Chet. It was modal, one chord dominating the entire song. Today, the guitar work might seem almost normal. It was anything but that at the time, being one of the first—if not *the* first—recordings featuring the electronic tone effect immortalized in the late 60s by Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton as "wah-wah." The unique percussion is Harman beating rhythm on cardboard tubes as studio ace Bob Moore slaps his upright bass rockabilly style. A bit exotic for his 1960 *Teensville* album, a mix of country, rock and pop tunes, it was a profound, prescient landmark in guitar technology that holds up over 40 years later.

"Cecelia" was a pop hit for singer Whispering Jack Smith in 1926, when Chet was just two years old. In 1955, he recorded his own magnificent interpretation. Nearly a year later, working on a 1956 Homer and Jethro session in New York, Chet joined in on a burning, in-studio jam on the jazz standard "Royal Garden Blues." Never before issued in the U.S., it's dominated by Jethro and jazz guitar great George Barnes. Chet adds perfect rhythm backing behind Jethro's and Barnes's pungent leads, then, following the solos by pianist Bob Davis and Jethro, throws out a brief single note and octave chorus before Barnes wraps it up.

Many of the Jerry Reed instrumentals that Chet covered were dazzling knuckle-busters. Others were more atmospheric, among them the sharp, deliberate "A Little Bit of Blues," which also appeared on the *Guitar Country* album. A repetitive, crackling chord riff drives the song, pushed along by Floyd Cramer, bassist Henry Strzelecki and Buddy Harman.

His relaxed, beguiling approach to Glenn Miller's "Sunrise Serenade," recorded at a 1954 Chicago session with Homer and Jethro and local studio bassist Holly Swanson, underscores another Atkins truism. He was born in East Tennessee's Smoky mountains, raised in rural north Georgia but was, like most of his generation, a child of the Big Band Era.

Merle Travis learned "Tiger Rag" in the 1930s under the tutelage of the Muhlenberg County, Kentucky guitar thumbpickers who taught him that region's unique picking style. Chet's romping 1957 version, recorded for his *Hi-Fi In Focus* LP, retains the Travis style except for occasional deviations into single string playing. The 1976 Atkins-Reed duet on Reed's original "Twichy" reflects their friendship and mutual admiration.

When RCA producer Steve Sholes signed Chet in 1947, the plan was for him to both sing and play, the better to compete with Merle Travis, at that time recording hit vocals for Capitol. Chet cut back on singing as time went on. One of the last he recorded during the first phase of his RCA career was his dry, wonderfully offhanded 1949 vocal on "Boogie Man Boogie." On it, he plays acoustic guitar, with Homer and Jethro harmonizing on the chorus.

He arranged "Cherokee," another big band favorite recorded for his 1970 *Yestergroovin'* album, in a jazz combo context, complete with electric organ. Nonetheless Chet, who admired jazzmen and counted many as friends, never aspired or claimed to be one. Here, he combines melodic lines with his characteristic single-string passages, hammer-ons, har-

monics and octaves to create a quintessential, albeit jazz-flavored, performance. The closing track, a solo interpretation of George Gershwin's "Liza" from the *Finger-Style Guitar* album, is a shimmering, richly nuanced interpretation blending syncopation with exquisite chord melody and cleanly articulated harmonics.

In his last years, he had a chance to reflect on of his career and closed his lavishly-illustrated coffee-table memoir *Me and My Guitars* with a characteristically modest benediction. "Years from now, after I'm gone," he wrote, "someone will listen to what I've done and know I was here. They may not know or care who I was, but they'll hear my guitars speaking for me and maybe they'll understand something."

We were indeed fortunate to live in Chet Atkins's time. Those to come need only hear him once. And they will understand.

RICH KIENZLE



1. YES MA'AM

(Jerry Reed)

Recorded Oct. 1, 1963 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Ray Edenton (guitar); Henry Strzelecki (bass);
Buddy Harman (drums); Floyd Cramer (piano) Produced by Bob Ferguson

Taken from *Guitar Country* RCA Victor LSP-2783

2. PETITE WALTZ

(Traditional)

Recorded Oct. 22, 1956 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar) Produced by Chet Atkins

Taken from *Finger-Style Guitar* RCA Victor LPM-1383

3. ONE MAN BOOGIE

(Chet Atkins)

Recorded April 26, 1951 at RCA Victor Studio 1, New York, NY;

Overdubbed June 15, 1951 at RCA Victor Studio A, Chicago, IL

Chet Atkins (guitar) Produced by Stephen H. Sholes

Previously Unreleased in U.S.

4. PRISSY

(Priscilla Hubbard)

Recorded July 22, 1966 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Jerry Reed (electric guitar); Jerry Carrigan (drums);

Roy Huskey, Jr. (bass); Jerry Smith (piano); Ray Edenton (rhythm guitar);

Boots Randolph (sax); Wayne Moss (bass) Produced by Bob Ferguson

RCA Victor single 47-8927

Country #30 / chart debut: 10/15/66

5. BARBER SHOP RAG

(Chet Atkins)

Recorded Feb. 3, 1949 at Fox Theatre, Atlanta, GA

Chet Atkins (guitar, vocal); Homer Haynes (guitar); Jethro Burns (mandolin);

Charles Grean (bass) Produced by Stephen H. Sholes and Charles Grean

RCA Victor single 47-5565

6. CARNAVALITO

(Edmundo P. Zaldivar)

Recorded Sept. 5, 1975 at RCA Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Lisa Silver (fiddle); Paul Yandell (guitar); Johnny Gimble (mandolin)

Produced by Chet Atkins and Bob Ferguson

Taken from *The Night Atlanta Burned* RCA APL1-1233

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7. BOO BOO STICK BEAT

(Harman-Loudermilk)

Recorded July 25, 1959 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Buddy Harman (percussion); Floyd Cramer (piano);

Bob Moore (bass) Produced by Chet Atkins

Taken from *Tennsville* RCA Victor LSP-2161

8. CECILIA

(Harry Ruby-Dave Dreyer)

Recorded Oct. 16, 1955 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Harold Bradley (rhythm guitar); Buddy Harman (drums);

Bob Moore (bass) Produced by Chet Atkins

RCA Victor single 47-6550

9. ROYAL GARDEN BLUES

(Spencer Williams-Clarence Williams)

Recorded Oct. 2, 1956 at RCA Victor Studio, New York, NY

Chet Atkins (rhythm guitar); Homer Haynes (rhythm guitar); Jethro Burns (mandolin);

Charles Grean (bass); George Barnes (lead guitar); Irving Goldberg (drums);

Bob Davis (piano) Produced by Stephen H. Sholes

Previously Unreleased in U.S.

10. SUNRISE SERENADE

(Frankie Carle-Nacio Herb Brown)

Recorded March 9, 1954 at RCA Victor Studio, Chicago, IL

Chet Atkins (guitar); Homer Haynes (guitar); Jethro Burns (mandolin);

Holly Swanson (bass) Produced by Stephen H. Sholes

Taken from *Chet Atkins and His Guitar* RCA Victor EPA-588

11. TIGER RAG

(Sbarbaro-Edwards-Ragas-Shields-Larocca-DeCosta)

Recorded June 22, 1957 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Buddy Harman (drums); Bob Moore (bass);

Floyd Cramer (piano) Produced by Chet Atkins

Taken from *Hi-Fi In Focus* RCA Victor LPM-1577

12. TWICHY

(Jerry R. Hubbard)

Recorded Sept. 27, 1976 at RCA Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Jerry Reed (guitar); Terry McMillan (harmonica)

Produced by Chet Atkins and Jerry Reed

Taken from *The Best of Chet Atkins & Friends* RCA APL1-1985

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13. BOOGIE MAN BOOGIE

(Chet Atkins)

Recorded Oct. 13, 1949 at RCA Victor Studio A, Chicago, IL

Chet Atkins (guitar, vocal); Homer Haynes (guitar, vocal);

Jethro Burns (mandolin, vocal); Anita Carter (bass) Produced by Stephen H. Sholes

RCA Victor single 48-0367

14. CHEROKEE

(Ray Noble)

Recorded Jan. 22, 1970 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Jerry Carrigan (drums); Floyd Cramer (piano);

Kossie Gardner (organ); Jimmy Capps (guitar); James Wilkerson (guitar);

Johnny Johnson (bass); Ralph Gallant (percussion) Produced by Bob Ferguson

Taken from *Yesteryear* RCA Victor LSP-4331

15. A LITTLE BIT OF BLUES

(Jerry Reed)

Recorded Oct. 1, 1963 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar); Ray Edenton (guitar); Henry Strzelecki (bass);

Buddy Harman (drums); Floyd Cramer (piano) Produced by Bob Ferguson

Taken from *Guitar Country* RCA Victor LSP-2783

16. LIZA

(Gus Kahn-Ira Gershwin-George Gershwin)

Recorded Oct. 22, 1956 at RCA Victor Studio, Nashville, TN

Chet Atkins (guitar) Produced by Chet Atkins

Taken from *Finger-Style Guitar* RCA Victor LPM-1383

Tracks 1-5, 7-11, 13-16 Originally Recorded Prior To 1972.

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Mastered by Elliott Federman at SAJE Sound, NYC

Digital Transfers by Dennis Ferrante at BMG Studios, NYC

Design: Smay Vision

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Thanks to Paul Barnabee, Mandana Eidgah, Joe Galante, Ron Howie,

Bob Jamieson, Pete Jones, Alex Miller, Gary Newman, Pam Robinson,

Dave Samuelson, Frank Ursolo, Butch Waugh, and Kathy Woods

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COUNTRY
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100 COUNTRY
CLASSIC HITS



CHET ATKINS

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